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THE COMMONWEAL
386 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 16

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Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Orange, Conn., under the act of March 3, 1879. Published weekly and printed in the U. S. A. by the Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N.Y. MUrray Hill 3-9685.

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U. S. and Canada, $8 a year. Foreign, $10. Single copies 25¢

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

FABLE FOR OUR TIMES

ONCE UPON A TIME the world was divided into two armed camps. On one side was a coalition of free nations. On the other was the Communist empire, directed and controlled by the U.S.S.R. With these two great powers contending over the shape of the future, men had to make their choice between them. Religiously-oriented people had for a long time been more conscious than others of the threat of Soviet domination; to them the persecution of religion and the death of freedom under Communist regimes was an old story. From the beginning, therefore, there was no doubt where they stood.

As time went on, in fact, it became difficult for many people to be anti-Communist enough for some religious publications. Almost anything that was put forward as anti-Communism was sure to win their uncritical support; almost anyone who called himself an anti-Communist was a hero. Any editor of this school knew that liberals were "soft on Communism." He knew that what the U.S. needed was bigger and better Congressional investigations, and less of this nonsense about American traditions and civil liberties. He had no time at all for people he referred to as "bleeding-hearts" or "do-gooders" or, more politely, as anti-anti-Communists.

All this naturally made for considerable domestic dissension, but at least one good result might have been expected. Surely the anti-Communist writers and publications would line up solidly behind the anti-Communist measures of the United States government; surely they could be counted on to back anti-Communist measures abroad, measures which had the support of most leaders in both political parties at home. But life is not that simple, of course, and things did not work out that way at all.

First there was the Marshall Plan, which was the forerunner for a general Western strategy of using economic power against the Communists in crucial overseas areas. The Marshall Plan was a key factor in transforming postwar Europe from an industrial wasteland into a relatively healthy community of nations, one in which production was forty per cent above prewar levels. It could not be proved, of course, but most experts thought that if the Marshall Plan had not existed at least part of Western Europe would have come under Soviet rule.

Did the Marshall Plan and the succeeding mutual security and foreign aid programs have the support of all the "real" anti-Communists, though? Hardly. Foreign spending was described by phrases like "Operation Rathole," and the whole idea of foreign aid was denounced as a Communist plot to make us spend our way into bankruptcy.

BY 1958 MATTERS had reached a crucial stage. In the year that Russia demonstrated its superiority in missile development and also stepped up its program of economic warfare overseas, the President of the United States asked less than four billion dollars for the nation's mutual security program. Most of this was to be used for military or defense aid, and he warned that any sharp reduction would mean higher defense spending at home and would eventually leave this country virtually alone in a world dominated by Russian and Chinese Communism. Nonetheless, his supporters in Congress immediately said the President would be lucky if his request was not slashed by more than twenty-five per cent.

Why would the President have such a hard time getting the money he needed for the mutual security program? One reason, certainly, was the

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constant criticism of all foreign aid programs, not in the Communist press, but in the anti-Communist press. Consider, for example, the case of Father Richard Ginder in *Our Sunday Visitor,* a Catholic weekly which has a circulation well up into the hundreds of thousands.

To Father Ginder, anything that can be classified as foreign aid is a program of "handouts" aimed at "losing friends and alienating people," to use his own phrase. In 1957 Father Ginder urged his readers to "keep hammering at 'foreign aid.' That is the expenditure that is in greatest part senseless and loaded with chiselers." Neither sputnik nor anything else managed to change his mind since then. In the February 9th issue of the *Visitor* he devoted his entire column to what he called the "Billion-dollar Boondoggle." One memorable sentence was characteristic: "When we read that the Government's Foreign Giveaway Program now totals roughly $67-billion, the mind staggers in stupidity. . . ."

Sixty-seven billion dollars is a lot of money. It must include the entire cost of the Marshall Plan in Western Europe, which alone amounted to thirteen billion dollars. It must include aid to Formosa and South Korea, as well as embattled Viet Nam; it must have paid for the successful fight against Communism in Greece, the strengthening of Turkey and just about the entire national struggle against Communism overseas since 1945. Yes, sixty-seven billion dollars is a huge sum—so huge, in fact, that it was roughly the equivalent of what Americans spent on movie and theater tickets and recreational goods in the same period of time.

Similarly, President Eisenhower's proposed mutual security "giveaway" in 1958 is again a terrible sum—about as much, in fact, as Americans normally spend in one year on radio and T.V. sets and phonograph records. No wonder Father Ginder and those who think like him have engaged in a crusade to save America from national bankruptcy and the ultimate triumph of Communism. And how annoying it must be to them that there are still people around who cannot see their point of view. How stupid those who say the United States is financially able to spend the equivalent of one year's cigarette money for the President's mutual security program! And how rash those people, like the editors of this magazine, who venture to suggest that the richest nation in the world might even expand this program to the point at which it would cost as much as the annual bill for cigarettes *and* movies, together. Obviously, such people must be mad, or worse. Perhaps they are not even anti-Communist at all. After all, if *Our Sunday Visitor* is not an anti-Communist publication, what is?

* * *

P.S. This editorial was called a fable, and fables should have an ending. In this case, though, history will have to supply it. A fable should also have a moral, but we think the reader will have no trouble supplying his own.

HOW MILD?

IN THE OLD DAYS of greater laissez-faire there was less justification than there is now to couple the current degree of national prosperity with Administration policies. Yet such a cause-and-effect relationship has always been uppermost in American minds—regardless of the often greater influence of temporary surges in foreign demand due to major natural calamities and wars in other lands.

It is simply not good politics for an incumbent to admit that things are not going well. The Eisenhower Administration has suceeded in holding off such recognition in the face of mounting evidence both local and national in scope. Secretary of the Treasury Robert B. Anderson, in a February 23 T.V. interview with Representative Keating (R.) of New York, is said to be the first member of the current Cabinet to go so far as to acknowledge publicly that the nation is undergoing a "mild recession."

Even as most of his fellow-Republicans still refuse to use the term (and the Democrats are stepping up attacks over this "Administration-fostered depression"), Secretary Anderson reiterates his faith that the decline will be so short-lived that personal and business tax cuts will probably not have to be called into play. Official confidence appears to rest on such items as the slight upturn in home building registered in the past two months; the fact that employment invariably picks up in April and May; the growing impact of bigger defense contracts; the seasonal resumption of nationwide highway construction; and the new plans for Post Office construction and modernization which comprise the only public works program which the Administration has brought forward to provide jobs.

Not only does unemployment throughout the land approach the five-million mark, but in many industries more catastrophic lay-offs have been avoided up to now only by resorting to reduced-income, part-time employment. Other indications

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of the character of the times can be found in the impressions of the business community that this is clearly a "hard-sell" period and that bargain hunting and price cutting are becoming more and more prominent. In the same way, political observers are convinced that heightening domestic anxieties and resentments dim the prospects for the Eisenhower program on foreign aid and trade.

Acknowledging the facts constitutes but one step in the attack against hard times. But once the major deficiencies in the economy have been officially admitted, the obstacles to remedial measures will greatly dwindle. As it is now, the recession snowball is gaining momentum. The inadequacy of trying to meet the situation by reducing margin requirements in Wall Street and encouraging business loans by cutting interest rates and permitting a small increase in available reserves becomes increasingly apparent.

To treat here of only one kind of possible economic stimulus, there is a great lack of basic facilities for this country's steadily growing population. It is even possible that if only America's housing needs were met on the doubled scale that realistic appraisal would require, recession would actually give way to an upturn in a very few months. Moreover, the need for new schools and hospitals appears to be at all-time peak. There is plenty of solid work available for any nationwide attack on unemployment.

RECIPROCAL TRADE

THE RECIPROCAL TRADE Act is up for extension this year, and, as Peter Kilby reported in these pages last week in his "Battle Over Tariffs," protectionist sentiment in Washington is stronger than ever. There is so little enthusiasm in Congress for the Administration's trade bill, which requests a five-year extension of the law, with authorization for additional tariff reductions by the President but with a compromise enlargement of the "escape-clause," that not one of the ten Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee would agree to sponsor it.

Beyond the traditional Republican high-tariff conviction, there are additional protectionist pressures this year. Southern Democrats in textile-producing states are abandoning their free-trade position in order to protect their new industries from increasingly serious overseas competition, and many other Congressmen from other parts of the country are faced with hard times and large-scale local unemployment among the voters in their constituencies.

The scramble to protect ailing home-town industries is understandable, and no one will suggest that certain Americans will simply have to suffer for the sake of the common good. There are industries and areas in the nation which are in serious economic straits, where there is mass unemployment and small hope of an upturn in the immediate future. Something should be done, should have been done long since, to assist these people, these regions, these industries. That the Administration has not acted in this area of need is another of its culpable omissions, one that threatens now its program in the area of foreign trade.

But however understandable the motives of some of the protectionists, and however much the need for measures to bolster "emergency areas" in the domestic economy, the answer to these problems is not killing or crippling the Trade Agreements Act. High tariffs mean a direct burden to individual and industrial consumers and an indirect burden to the economy as a whole. Further, they thwart the efforts of friendly nations all over the world to sustain their own struggling economies, forcing them to seek grants and loans from us to make up for what we will not let them earn by trade with us, or driving them in the interest of economic survival to enter trade-and-aid agreements with the Soviets. High tariffs cost us money, cost us friends, render aid to the Communists in their relentless efforts to divide and conquer the West by any and every means.

The need for action to assist our various economically-stricken areas at home is a separate problem and demands its own remedy. To cut back our reciprocal trade agreements would only multiply the harm, to every American, and to the entire free world.

TROOP WITHDRAWALS

THESE DAYS, offers and announcements of troop withdrawals are prominent in Soviet and Chinese propaganda. They form an integral part of a generally more peaceful stance. And, both implicitly and expressly, these proclamations call for comparable withdrawals on the part of the United States and of the NATO nations. In Europe as well as the Far East any such drawing back on our part would be to present incalculable strategic advantages to our determined adversaries—who will still be only a few miles farther away.

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This can hardly be better illustrated than in divided Korea, from the northern part of which the Chinese Communists plan to retire their 350,000 troops before this year is out. Before going into the strategic aspects of this pull-out, it is important to mention that it will have advantages beyond propaganda effects for both North Korea and its Chinese ally. In the first instance a considerable economic burden will be lifted, in that these foreign troops have been largely living off the land in North Korea. For the Chinese, too, this can mean that many of these returning troops can be put on the soil to battle against China's tremendous food deficits.

Strategically this shift of forces will leave the picture little changed. Ever since a truce agreement was finally reached between the invaders from the North and the forces of the United Nations, there has been a continuous build-up of North Korean armed strength, in flagrant violation of that very armistice agreement. A whole string of military air bases—from which devastating attacks could be launched—has been set up and hundreds of jets and other planes flown in. Thousands of Russian tanks have been supplied along with all sorts of modern guns and military equipment. The North Korean army of half a million men has had the most rigorous training and by itself now constitutes a formidable fighting force. South of the truce line we have not been idle either. South Korea would be no pushover, but it is probably over-matched.

The withdrawal of the Chinese troops across the Yalu a few miles to the north makes for little change in this picture of strategic disadvantage. South Korea itself still remains in jeopardy; the Chinese Communists in great numbers are but a day or two farther away from the 38th Parallel and the Allied line. Yielding little, the Chinese Communists can expect little in return, despite all their peaceful protestations.

PROTECT ME FROM MY FRIENDS

REPUBLICANS are probably still smarting from former President Truman's knock-down attack on the Republican Party and all its works delivered on Washington's birthday. Even so, they must have been prepared for it. Mr. Truman relishes the political rough-and-tumble, and his broadsides, although scathing, were no more so than G.O.P. leaders had a right to expect.

But good Republicans must have rubbed their eyes—and maybe held their heads—when they read the speech given by their own former President Hoover, also on the occasion of Washington's birthday. While Mr. Truman was rubbing Republican noses in the country's present economic distress, among other things, and charging that Republicans, "like the old French Bourbons, never do learn anything," what was Mr. Hoover saying?

He assured his listeners that our current problems were no more than "temporary reverses," and amounted only to a "passing trial." He warned against government intervention in the operations of "private initiative" as a temptation to be resisted at all costs. All we need, Mr. Hoover went on, is "faith in ourselves and in our future." As a clincher to his argument that "prosperity is just around the corner"—although mercifully he didn't use those dread words—he revealed at the end of his speech that the address he had given was the same one he had delivered twenty-seven years ago, in a similar "period of anxiety and discouragement"! Forgetting, perhaps, his overwhelming defeat in the election of 1932, he reminded the nation that he felt quite the same way in 1931.

If anybody but the venerable Mr. Hoover had opened up this deepest of Republican wounds, there would doubtless be cries of "sabotage" and "Democratic dupe." Harry Truman at his best couldn't have done more for the Democrats than Mr. Hoover did.

JUSTICE FOR THE BIRDS

LOVERS of fair play will be pleased that the long-suffering, much maligned South Polar skua—an Antarctic bird of prey—has at last found a champion. Far from being "the vulture of the Antarctic," the name given it by detractors, the skua is really an eminently praiseworthy bird, a "miniature eagle," in fact.

We have this testimony in a special dispatch to the New York *Times*, which quotes Mr. Carl Eklund, a biologist and skua-fancier who is presently in Antarctica studying the habits of his favorite bird. The only explanation for the harsh judgment of the skua, according to Mr. Eklund, is that it feeds on baby penguins, and people are sentimental about penguins. Aside from this, "all the nasty things people say about the skua are a lot of hogwash."

We're no ornithologists, but we think Mr. Eklund is right. Why should the penguin be such a sacred cow?

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From Engagement to Indifference:

Politics and the Writer

Does our literature reflect our social thought? The political withdrawal of the younger writer, a much-remarked phenomenon of our times, is explored by a British and an American critic.

In Britain, Cautious Coexistence

by DEREK STANFORD

WHAT SORT of interest does the younger British writer feel for contemporary politics? On the whole, we may answer, a sketchy, tepid one. There is no love-relationship, as in the thirties; and when some sort of interest does exist, it reveals itself—with qualifications—in a guarded and critical approach, a kind of cautious coexistence.

Violence, whether national or individual, has a way of bringing opinion to a head, of precipitating in clearer terms what we have previously been more dimly feeling. Yet those in touch with literary opinion at the time of the Suez Crisis could not but contrast the multiple reactions with the comparatively uniform response made by an earlier generation in the face of the Spanish Civil War.

This incoherent climate of response was made manifest for me in the behavior of two of my friends on the occasion of the Suez landing. The reactions of both these people were unpredictable, cutting at their natural affiliations and at the *en bloc* nature of their thought. The first—a young literary editor, working on a right-wing weekly—resigned his job because his paper supported the Conservative policy. His own approach to politics, up to that time, had been an enthusiastic analytical right-wing sympathy. He was on the side of the younger Tories who did not consider that party loyalty precluded them from critical comment. He was also, by birth, a Jew. The other was a B.B.C. producer, who had long described himself as a staunch republican, and had frequently proclaimed his dislike of "Public School imperialism." Suez, however, had worked upon his feelings to the point where he had been within an ace of volunteering for the Army—for the French or Jewish forces if the British declined him.

These examples illustrate the apparent incoherence or confusion of response with which the younger British writer meets the issue of political decision. Of course, I might have chosen a more representative case. During the most critical phase of the Suez expedition, I remember spending a whole evening with four other writers, all under forty, with not a single word heard or spoken all night about events then in hand. I might add, too, that a fifth author-friend, learning of our conversational omission, branded our talk as irresponsible. In turn, some of us might have inclined to pronounce his own sincere reiteration of party watch-words a *trahison des clercs*. We might have urged that the writer's first duty is to pick his words carefully, scan their meaning, and subject the words of others to a like examination.

Perhaps these few examples furnish some general notion of the literary-political picture. Mr. Kingsley Amis, who sketches his self-portrait as "an elderly young intellectual . . . with connections in the educational and literary worlds and with left-wing sympathies," sums up the position in the following sentence. "The decline in political activity," he writes, "among intellectuals as a whole must, I think, be taken as a fact in the perspective of the last twenty years, and it is particularly noticeable among our younger

Mr. Stanford, a well-known British writer, is the author of critical studies on Christopher Fry, Emily Bronte, and Dylan Thomas.

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novelists and poets." This, I believe, would be taken as a commonly accepted account of the position.

THERE ARE a great many factors to explain this condition. The first are political, and they have all been mooted before. The second are cultural, and these have not previously, I think, been drawn out.

As for political causes behind the declining interest which the younger writer gives to politics, there is, initially, the new liaison between politics and science (humane literature's old rival). This makes any prospect of war and warfare a terrifying one for the imagination. There is the lack of enthusiasm, or downright disapproval, felt for the Welfare State. Those who do not condemn it on economic grounds believe that its advent has somehow taken the glory out of the Socialist Cause. It is all bread, margarine and jam. No aspiration, no adventure. There is the equal failure of the Conservative Party to provide an inspiriting program or to get down to rock-bottom planning. Its inability to control or halt inflation is particularly annoying to the younger writer, whose financial resources are usually precarious enough. To this must be added the refusal of the Party—despite Sir Anthony Eden's protestation that "the Conservative tradition is also a tradition of good writing"—to assist or encourage the arts. Indeed, one of its first economies, on entering into office after the Labor Government, was to cut down the grants allowed to the British Council for furthering national culture at home and abroad. And the general discrediting of Russia and Marxism left the idealistic left-wing mind without a country or an ideology about which its thoughts and emotions might cohere.

These are the factors operative in politics which make the younger writer diffident or unwilling with regard to a closer relationship between literature and the political life. But there are likewise a number of factors inhering in the cultural situation which incline to impede any *rapprochement* between politics and letters.

Literature and art tend to cohere around certain systems of thought and conduct, of which the two most socially important are politics and religion. The new spirit of academicism in younger British writing furthers the isolation of letters from political, civic or religious opinion. This esoteric specialization, as we find it, for example, in fashionable textual criticism of the poem-(or novel-) in-vacuum school, separates politics and letters and works against a joint study of them.

In addition, the declining fortunes of neo-romanticism, widespread and active in the forties, has meant the loss of Anarchism (with which the movement was associated) as a possible political choice for the writer. With its less dogmatic ideology, the diverse interpretation of its aims, its individual, de-centralized tradition, Anarchism held many attractions for the artist and man of letters. These attractions were heightened by the fact that three of its recent leading exponents—Sir Herbert Read, Alex Comfort, and George Woodcock—were, besides being men of theory, possessed of critical poetic sensibility. Kropotkin, the greatest figure of the movement in the nineteenth century, had likewise a liberal taste in the arts, and his book on *Ideals in Russian Literature* reveals a breadth of taste and intuition rare in the political thinker. Kropotkin was also a considerable ethical thinker (see his *Mutual Aid* and *Ethics*).

Anarchism was thus able to offer a more humane body of thought than is to be found in most political groups. It was idealistic, revolutionary, philosophic, and individualistic. These four qualities often commend themselves to men-of-letters, the more so when they themselves are young.

CONVERSELY, the absence of a sustaining emotion, by which political matters are colored, and by which they retain their imaginative appeal, may owe much to the neo-classicism now very much in vogue. The feeling-tone of this movement is low and chill. It lacks emotional expansiveness, free play for sentiment and imagination. Neo-classicism helps to keep down the temperature of man's instinctive responses, and does not look with approval on any variety of Gide's *"l'acte gratuit."*

One of its spokesmen, Kingsley Amis, has defined romanticism, in a political context, as "an irrational capacity to become inflamed by interests and causes that are not one's own, that are outside oneself." This looks like a definition of quixoticism or of disinterestedness. Amis disapproves of such an attitude, finding it inflammable and unrealistic; and he seems to argue, by implication, that good politics derive from enlightened self-love.

Logical or critical positivism is probably another factor helping to keep the political circulation of the young writer from becoming overheated. The language of political parties is notoriously an idiom of platitude and jargon, a repository of unreflective statements. With their celebrated verbal analysis and their use of the Verification Principle, the critical positivists could not ask for less resistant subject-matter than political rhetoric. It is not to be expected that its disciples will display a large measure of political fervor.

Further, the shift in cultural attention from a

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revolutionary to a traditional sensibility, as discoverable in the literature of the past, is most likely having its repercussion on the younger writer's interest in politics. The present waning appeal, say, of Shelley, and the waxing magnetic attraction of such figures as Jane Austen, Coleridge, and Newman—to go no further back than the nineteenth century—is probably to be paralleled by the declining interest in Marx and Bakunin.

But if this means a loss to left-wing parties of the younger writer, it is doubtful whether it argues a gain for the right. The late Percy Wyndham Lewis, whose work is now receiving wide critical examination, could have provided the Conservative Party, during its leanest years in the thirties, with entire arsenals of ideas, had its members been ready to receive them. That they did not lend ear, and that their party failed to produce—in the *interbellum* years—one single thinker of notable stature, gives one to wonder if they do not choose to retain the label bestowed upon them by their opponents, who speak of them as "the stupid party." However this may or may not apply to the individual party member, it certainly appears that the Conservative politician places no excessive premium on brains. The younger writer, who votes Conservative (which he may do for a number of reasons) is clearly not tempted by the intellectual brilliance of the party's present program. It is, of course, possible to defend "stupidity" as a factor making for stability in national life. Walter Bagehot and John Henry Newman both made out a case for it: the first, as applying to the electorate; the second, as relating to the strength of the High Church party and its supporters at a time when the Anglican cause was under attack by Whig politicians. But to maintain or promote "stupidity" among the leaders of a party is a rather different thing from defending it, for its psychological assets, as a characteristic of party supporters.

The influence of George Orwell and Arthur Koestler has been another feature in diluting or negating the fervor of Leftist thought among writers. Both of these authors had sounded the entire gamut of Socialist opinion, and the fact that Orwell at his death remained a nominal Socialist, and that Koestler is still thought of as being one, does not minimize their devastating criticism of Socialist orthodoxy. Orwell, in his novel *1984*, emphatically envisaged the villain of the piece as "Big Brother," no True-Blue figure; and, as far back as the last year of World War II, Koestler was saying that he preferred Colonel Blimp to the Kremlin commissar.

Of Orwell, Kingsley Amis has written that "what he did was to become a right-wing propagandist by negation, or at any rate a supremely powerful—though unconscious—advocate of political quietism." One may question that word "unconscious," but certainly as bearing on Orwell's effect, rather than on his intention, Amis's account is substantially valid.

I HAVE SPOKEN of the cultural situation as it relates to left- or right-wing thinking, and as it is likely or unlikely to foster Conservative or Socialist adherents. What, one may ask, are its bearings, if any, upon political liberalism?

According to newspaper reports, the Liberal Party membership, among the students of Oxford and Cambridge, stands today numerically (and proportionally) higher than it has stood for a long period. A taste and vocation for humane arts and knowledge naturally predisposes a person towards that party which claims to uphold the virtues of tolerance and moderation. It is, though, seriously to be questioned whether life at an Ancient University provides a microcosm of the outside modern world; and one may therefore ask whether student liberalism is not likely to prove an interim phase which ends when its holder leaves the university.

The long alliance between liberalism and humanism needs no emphasizing. A university is the natural home of the humanist attitude, but the prevailing temper of the world (especially in political matters) is better described as anti-humanist. This means that those assumptions which the student acquires at the university will often be contradicted or dispelled once he finds himself outside its walls. The following passage from Mr. Frederick Lohr's study *Greek, Roman, and Jew* (1952) sums up, suggestively, the relationship between the liberal-humanist approach and power-politics since 1914. "After the first world-war," writes Lohr, "a book was published entitled *The Strange Death of Liberalism,* and there are still people who are puzzled by the rapid decline of liberal values. They cannot understand why an outlook upon the world which was once so esteemed should now be looked upon as effete. The answer lies in the experience of crisis. Liberal ideas cannot withstand a crisis. The liberal way of life is a compound of tolerance and compromise—Liberalism is a gentleman's creed and neither the facts nor the spirit of our time is gentle. It was one of the flowers that bloomed in a protected area of civilization, and Europe has recently been opened to the harsh realities of history."

The name of Frederick Lohr leads me to remark on a phenomenon outside my present theme, but appropriate as a close to this essay. During the last war, Lohr gave promise of an unusual talent for political thinking in depth with his monograph *The Philoso-*

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phy of Anarchism. By 1945, however, he had adopted a religious view of life, and his closest political affiliations were with the Personalist Movement in France.

In Britain we have no influential philosophical-political group-thinking. Neither do we possess any effective Christian political parties. Religion, nonetheless, remains a strong magnetic force for a number of younger writers; and it is possible that the work of not a few might coalesce about religious thought rather than about party or political opinion.

In America, Intellectual Bomb Shelters

by WILLIAM ESTY

A FAST, FLIP, only partly unfair answer to the question "What are the political attitudes of the younger American writers?" would be: there are no younger American writers, and they have no political attitudes. This statement is not, of course, wholly just, and any reviewer intent on justice must set about defining Groups and descrying Tendencies. Let us first survey the "younger" American writing scene teleologically, from on high. We can then traverse selected parts of it on foot and view the phenomena zoologically.

The most obvious, and probably the most important, thing to say is that the political and, more broadly, social attitudes of younger American writers are much like the attitudes of the rest of us. Like us, they are apprehensive and tired, tired especially of politics. This is as true of the writers who put politics explicitly into their work as of those who do not. The politics of most of the "younger" novels is curiously unreal, unfelt—but then, so is the world, so are the people of these novels. American writers, like other intellectuals, have swung between the Scornful-Depressed and the Engaged reactions to public life; insofar as we are now mostly Scornful-Depressed, our period resembles the twenties more closely than the earnest thirties. The American intelligentsia in the twenties felt a contemptuous, frequently amused indifference to the absurdity of public affairs, an attitude typically issuing in theoretical socialism combined with a juvenile brand of hedonism. The intelligent American, in Mencken's metaphor, was a man in a zoo. Well, the zoo is still there, but now it is harder to separate oneself so cozily from the animals, if only because the whole zoo may go up in flames with us inside. The men of the twenties had a gaiety, an energy in their disillusionment, even in their despair, which looks almost idyllic to our envious eyes.

So one cannot be too hard on our young writers if their "politics" is a stammering, rather unconvincing affair: which of us is better? William Styron—the best, along with Mary McCarthy, of the at-least-tangentially political—tells us in *The Long March* that, "Born into a generation of conformists, even Mannix . . . was aware that his gestures were not symbolic, but individual, therefore hopeless, maybe even absurd, and that he was trapped like all of them in a predicament which one personal insurrection could, if anything, only make worse." Later, Mannix does rebel against The System, and "he only mutilated himself by this perverse and violent rebellion. . . ." Most of us, most of the time, will agree, sighing; it is Our Time. But where is the Stendhal who will make opera out of the time we sigh over? He knew what his time, the *juste-milieu,* did to rebels; and, facing the utter defeat of his yearnings for France, he made honest music out of it, as Yeats in "Lapis Lazuli" did out of our fear of annihilation by bomb.

Below the Styron level of bleakly compassionate, circumscribed honesty we find Allen Ginsburg addressing America "Go——yourself with your atom bomb./ I don't feel good don't bother me./ . . . America stop pushing I know what I'm doing." And below this is Augie March, "hero" of Saul Bellow's novel, summing up his attitude to life: "Meanwhile the clouds, birds, cattle in the water, things, stayed at their distance, and there was no need to herd, account for, hold them in the head . . . occasionally I could look out like a creature." The passionate longing to escape vision and commitment, to trade man's estate for that of the kinkajou or beetle, which breathes through Mr. Bellow's "picaresque comic" novel is the extreme temptation of us all in the fifties: the forsaking of politics and, indeed, life, for an intellectual bomb shelter.

IF LIKE us they are politically rather numb, if they furthermore find the world around them hard even to look at clearly, or at least to present, then our younger writers also betray, explicitly or implicitly, certain deeply-held views about our life today which carry utter conviction, for they are our views too. The credo might be summed up in the closely related

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maxims that Things Are Tough; that Things Are Complicated; and that One Must Be Hep. That is, one must be sophisticated, aware of the complexities—so many more than we used to imagine: not that our awareness will really help us much, but it is a duty, the duty to truth. This idea crops up even in Brendan Gill's flyweight *The Day the Money Stopped;* the novel's hero may be an improvident playboy, but he is redeemed by his devotion to exposing the Full Truth.

The tough-complicated theme runs through Norman Mailer's *The Man Who Studied Yoga* (sex is tough; so is politics: what to do if you're still a radical and hate Nixon's guts but know about the labor camps in Russia?); Bernard Wolfe's slick, readable, superficial Raymond Chandler plus politics-and-psychiatry thriller *In Deep;* Wright Morris's *The Field of Vision,* a sad essay on our powers to transform and, more potently, our aptness to be transformed; and many, many others. The implicit insistence on hepness—part of what Lionel Trilling calls, so rightly, the "secularization of morality" or, more simply, "The Terror"—is strong in the fiction of Dachine Rainer, whose sophistication is the handmaiden of self-pity (one may understand so much and still stiffen in a rented Village room), and J. D. Salinger, whose young mystics are able to reprove the ego of other young mystics who dislike young men who dislike Flaubert in a way that smacks of ego. The gifted Mr. Salinger, the St. Just of the secular quest for purity, has wrenched from an extreme form of The Terror an achievement far more vivid and vertebrate than Bellow's terrible, limp sadness, but one that may be just as much a dead-end. We are a long way from "politics."

The obligation to hepness, knowledge—Seeing Things As They Are—is likely to mean slightly different things, depending on the sex of the writer. To the women, Elizabeth Spencer in *The Voice at the Back Door,* Doris Betts in *Tall Houses in Winter,* H. H. Lynde in *The Adversary,* it means Accepting Responsibility. To the men, it is more likely to mean Know Thyself: "We've got to know who we are" (James Reichly, *The Burying of Kingsmith*). Both Wolfe and Morris use the metaphor of a flawed-heroic "touching the bottom"—skin-diving too deep in Wolfe's novel, an unsuccessful attempt to walk on water in Morris's—to signify failure but also, more importantly, an exploration that is really the exploration of self. Wolfe, very much of his time and place, turns motives on their heads like dolls, asserts that the free man is he who is not "strangled by his [own] diapers," and in general accomplishes the reduction of politics to psychoanalysis. Knowing and Responsibility fuse in the work of Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, who have achieved the important feat of *seeing* the Negro rather than "the Negro Question." This allows them to produce art, which is to say create visibility, where before were only the clichés of rage and pity.

OUR YOUNGER writers present us not so much with the anti-hero as the plain un-hero. Saul Bellow's Augie March and Tommy Wilhelm are the type in its full flower, the *schlemiehl,* the poor slob, manipulated by others, aimless, monotonously kicked in the pants, but of course "well-meaning," cherishing his confusion, hugging his good will and "humanity" to his bosom as the Spartan boy his fox. The condition of such mental stumblebums is supposed to be significant and could be made so, but in art a thing must first give us the pleasure of the well-wrought or it signifies nothing to us at all. The danger of using a naive central character who is not treated satirically, who suffers and suffers and will not learn, is that we may laugh instead of cry, especially when we guess his creator means him to stand for Big Things. When the Communists and anti-Communists of Irwin Shaw's *The Troubled Air* finish knocking the "liberal" hero around, we only wish a member of the Mau Mau would come along and finish the poor dope off. Wolfe and, even better, Morris make use of a sort of would-be hero, the hero as fool, implying a rejection of power and "success," and therefore of politics, for politics is power.

We may take leave of the hero in our contemporary fiction by noting that two writers so apparently dissimilar as Saul Bellow and Jack Kerouac both make much use of the term "hung-up," i.e., frustrated, immobilized. And by further noting the musing of Mailer's fictional "hung-up" writer: "One could not have a *hero* today . . . there is only a modern hero damned by no more than the ugliness of wishes whose satisfaction he will never know."

The last General Tendency to note in "younger" American writing is the prevalence of an almost aggressively flat, graceless style. Miss Spencer, Miss Betts, Mr. Reichley are all devotees of this he-went-into-the-bedroom-and-lit-his-pipe-and-scratched-himself-and-kissed-his-wife school. To read twenty-odd recent American novels is to live through a sort of Dark Night of the Taste, to realize how rare is, not the artistic gift, but the mere *narrative* gift, the brute ability to make the ordinary business of life minimally interesting. And these young men and women are so intelligent, so well-educated, they plan and work so seriously, they have all the right attitudes! They will their novels into existence, we will ourselves to read through them, and it is all a labor of virtue in a desert of cacti.

And then there is Shaw's wearisomely "smart" dialogue, and Miss Lynde's insufferable serious-women's-magazine prose, so considerately clear about everything small, so comfortably vague about everything large,

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withal so suffocatingly cozy. As if with unconscious masochistic intention, many of these writers include in their works embarrassingly self-referential passages about writing. Doris Betts: "Fen said, 'Is it hard to write a novel?' 'Harder for some than others,' Ryan said. 'Very hard to write a good, even a passable novel . . . Maybe the great writers span the gap with something more than work.' Whatever that was, he thought." Jack Kerouac: " 'Man, wow, there's so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even *begin* to get it all down and without modified restraints and all hung-up on like literary inhibitions and grammatical fears . . .' " Allen Ginsberg: "who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish . . ." H. H. Lynde: " 'What I'm talking about now,' he corrected her, 'is fiction. Fiction has fallen on hard days, poor old girl.' 'So much of it is poor stuff now, don't you think?' 'Sure. Pure tripe,' he agreed heartily. 'I seldom read a novel myself.' "

SWITCHING from trends to categories, we should next note a couple of groups or schools. There is the Paul Bowles—Flannery O'Connor cult of the Gratuitous Grotesque. A specimen Bowles story: an American professor of linguistics goes into a remote corner of the North African desert in search of obscure dialects. He is captured by primitive tribesmen who make him into their slave-clown and cut off his tongue (*lingua*—get it?). Flannery O'Connor tells us that she writes out of a "deep Christian concern." The story of hers which, in Allen Tate's view, best exemplifies this concern is the tale of an embittered, virginal Southern bluestocking with a wooden leg who accompanies a young Bible salesman into a barn to seduce him. Her "victim" produces, out of a dummy Bible, whiskey, contraceptives and dirty playing cards. In the end he runs off with her wooden leg in his suitcase. All of these overingenious horrifics are presumably meant to speak to us of the Essential Nature of Our Time, but when the very real and cruel grotesquerie of our world is converted into clever gimmicks for *Partisan Review*, we may be forgiven for reacting with the self-same disgust as the little old lady from Dubuque.

The conscientious zoologist cannot ignore Kerouac-Ginsburg, the literary hoax which San Francisco successfully imposed on the nation last year. This "hip" movement, celebrating sex, jazz, dope, frenetic movement, and *life*, has been hailed by Norman Mailer as the Wave of the Future. *On the Road* is an account (not really a fiction; like James Jones and too many others, Kerouac thinks that writing is Having Experiences and Putting Them Down) of his friends' experiments in the unsystematic derangement of the senses. It should have been titled *Walt Whitman's Last Gasp*, or perhaps *The Chary Ape*, for Kerouac remains a Nice College Boy, a mere fellow-traveler of psychopathy and psychosis, fight his destiny as he will.

The "political" significance of the Kerouac world, whose key words are "holy," "mad," "soul," "wild," and "rush," is simply that it is the Great Bad Place; and poor Kerouac secretly knows it and is ashamed of knowing. As for Ginsberg, his celebrated "Howl" states that the "starving hysterical naked" friends of his who populate the poem are "the best minds of my generation," and are all "holy." If Mr. Ginsberg should be mistaken about this, we are justified in echoing Herbert Gold's farewell in the *Nation* to the booze-and-bop boys: "Hipster, Go Home."

The "politics" of these groups is either invisible or too vasty to be seen. Some very brief notes are in order on the politics of our younger writers who *are* political, or at least semi-demi-hemi-political. Herman Wouk: the social fabric and all traditional decency are undermined by cowardly irresponsible self-serving intellectuals. Mary McCarthy: conservatives aren't so bad after all, they see the folly of the liberal intellectual's excessive, self-tormenting ethical scruples, and besides, they are all male and rather masterful. Nelson Algren, Jones, Kerouac, Ginsberg: debated Empsonian Pastoral; the outlaw underdogs are better than The System; "the bum's as holy as the seraphim!" Irwin Shaw: be hep, be sad, be good. Elizabeth Spencer: we must accept responsibility for fighting the corruption which flourishes when laziness and the profits of the status quo accommodate evil. James Reichley: we have a wealth of political detail yet everything comes down to the individual, but we're not quite sure how. H. H. Lynde: "Just hang on" and "deal with life and man as they [are]." John Cheever: go bravely into the great crazy world, but take with you as touchstone and amulet the memory of private joys and sane traditional ways. Wolfe, Mailer and Styron as above.

Our younger writers, then, are mostly honest: they reflect the feelings of impotence and fear and hemmed-in weariness that we all share. But, with honorable partial exceptions, they have not yet made art out of our situation. Intelligence, good will, industry are not enough. "We lack the power to imagine what we know." One could work up a Ph.D. thesis on "The Man of Good Will, Alone and Sorely Beset, in the Contemporary American Novel," but it wouldn't really be worth the doing. When we have more good writing, we will have more good political writing. Those who assert that our books must *necessarily* be mediocre because our age is mediocre are merely arguing in a circle; they forget Stendhal. The novelist who will rise above our times has not happened yet: we await him.

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FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

NOTHING, they say, is quite so dead as yesterday's newspaper. I am sure that holds for opinion magazines as well. But from time to time some earnest scholar does pore through old issues of The Commonweal. This page is being written for some such future researcher who might be wondering what it was like to live in the winter of 1958.

It is largely a time of indecision. The overwhelming fact of our lives of course is the Cold War. Even now, though, that phrase "Cold War" sounds a little out of date—not that the war is over but that it seems to have reached a dead end. The word "war" no longer seems to describe the struggle between East and West; that struggle, rather, seems to have become an accepted fact of life, like natural disorders and disease. True, the struggle goes on, but it is like the daily, prosaic, quietly heroic effort to rid mankind of cancer; the drama is gone, the sense of urgency has been blunted by time if nothing else.

You rarely hear people talking about the essential political and moral issues any more. The emphasis now is on the military aspects. Due to the absoluteness of modern weapons, for us at least—and I suspect the same is true in the Soviet—a strange reversal has taken place. Our weapons are determining our foreign policy, rather than the other way around. The result is that there is a sense of helplessness throughout the nation, an almost stoical acceptance of the most dread possibility. Two years ago a little song called *Que Sera, Sera* zoomed to great popularity. We do not sing the song any more, but the sentiment it expressed is pervasive. The fact is, Mr. Historian of the future, we are calm, almost uncannily calm, in the face of great danger. The scientists keep telling us that we may be hovering on the brink of total destruction. But life goes on and we are all getting used to the idea that civilization's days may be numbered. I suppose that is so because none of us actually believes it.

It was Chesterton, wasn't it, who pointed out that the people who lived during the fall of Rome did not even know Rome was falling. But suppose they did, would they have acted any differently? I doubt it. We, for instance, have every reason to believe that cigarettes are extremely perilous, but most of us keep on smoking. Similarly, though we know what dangers may await mankind in the nuclear age, that knowledge has not made a great deal of difference in our way of life. There is no panic. The subject rarely comes up: who speaks of rope in a hangman's house? We are busy about the usual things. The concerns that really hold us are small personal worries—the job, the family, the monthly bills, the weather. Scientists on both sides of the Iron Curtain are glum, Jeremiahs one and all, but they simply have not gotten their message across. Maybe it is just as well.

During World War II we used to hear predictions that the hostilities would last for a decade. Soldiers in the Pacific used to chant "The Golden Gate by '48" and at times even that seemed optimistic to them. But most of the time throughout that war we all believed it would not, indeed could not, last much longer. Actually it was longer than we counted on when we got into it and considerably shorter than the gloomier prophets predicted.

The Cold War, however, which for more than a decade has been the focal point of world history, promises to last indefinitely. No one can foresee an end to it. Of course the big bang would bring it to some kind of conclusion, but the world simply can not afford that kind of decisiveness. It looks as if we and our children and perhaps the generation after that one too are going to have to live in a dangerously divided world.

This fact, Mr. Historian of the future, is slowly sinking into our public consciousness. We are going to have to live with this thing, we are coming to realize, for a long, long time.

Now for a short war, cold or hot, a certain amount of ferment is understandable, a certain amount of near-hysteria is probably inescapable. But the decision to settle down for the long pull means the restoration of sobriety and rational reaction, and I think this fact will explain certain changes we are undergoing.

For a time we permitted ourselves all the luxuries of war—the heightened feeling, less-than-sober reactions to world events, compromise with our own best traditions. You can find that story described in the volumes of this magazine from 1950 to 1955. But about two years ago things started to calm down. Now we are almost back to normal. We are re-discovering our own best traditions, traditions of civil liberty and fair play. In some cases, like the Army's recalling the dubious discharges handed out during the height of the earlier hysteria, we are making an effort to put the pieces back together again. Of course a certain number of broken lives and hopelessly shattered careers lie among the wreckage which are beyond salvage. We do not talk much about them. But the work of restoration is being quietly carried on.

If you are looking for a name for this particular time, The Restoration seems as good as any—the restoration of American principles, American ideals, American institutions—all the priceless values that in the first fury of the Cold War we almost lost.

JOHN COGLEY.

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The Communist Party appears to have begun a shrewd and potentially dangerous maneuver

India's 'Gandhian' Communists

by SEYOM BROWN

THE MOVES of the Communist Party of India will bear watching in 1958. The organization which Nehru once called "the stupidest communist party in the world" appears to be making a shrewd tactical maneuver which could dangerously blur the already hazy pattern of Indian politics.

Of greater potential significance than the C.P.I.'s bearish embrace of "parliamentarism" and "constitutionalism" before the 1957 elections is the possibility that its recent flirtation with the neo-Gandhian movement may develop into more than an Indian summer's romance. When the Chief Minister of Kerala symbolically took a stroll last May with Acharya Vinoba Bhave, it was regarded by many as nothing more than a gesture of traditional South-Indian hospitality to the "walking saint." It was unthinkable that the new Communist regime could be seriously endorsing the man and the program that were being universally hailed as India's best antidote to Communism.

Bhave had started his *Bhoodan* (land gift) walks in Hyderabad in 1951 to counteract the psychology of violence which the Communists had injected into the landless peasants of that feudal state. He appealed to the landowners' sense of morality. "If you have four sons and a fifth is born, you would certainly give him his share," the Acharya pleaded. "Treat me as your fifth son, and give me my share." The land thus collected was distributed to the landless. Throughout India, especially where land disparities were most severe, the movement caught on, and the Communists had the wind taken out of their sails. Here was Gandhi's much ridiculed theory of trusteeship put to the test and working. Here was the world's most dramatic refutation of the Marxian dialectic.

But while the Nehru Government supported Bhoodan largely as a weapon for weakening the influence of the C.P.I. in depressed rural areas, Bhave himself never was unfriendly towards the Communists. Instead, he invited them to give up their faith in violence and join his own movement. Recalling that Gandhi had admonished his disciples to combat untruth by truth, violence by non-violence, Vinoba consistently maintained that his cordial attitude towards the Communists was a natural outgrowth of the Mahatma's philosophy of *satyagraha* (truth-force).

The C.P.I. first denounced Bhave as a capitalist-sponsored holy man. However, as the Party began to pursue its tactic of "Left Unity" through "United Democratic fronts" during and after the 1952 elections, it was compelled to take into account, at least, the mass appeal of Bhoodan. The C.I.P.'s Politburo report to its 1953 national conference recognized that "the hold of Gandhian ideology . . . is still powerful among the masses of the people. This directly affects the manner in which resistance is developing."

MEANWHILE, Bhave's movement had taken a turn which allowed him to woo the Communists with more force and gave the latter more of a rationale to "go Gandhian" if they wished. In 1952, at the village of Manroth, *Gramdan* (village gift) was announced. Every landholder in the village surrendered ownership to the whole village. Describing this innovation, Jayaprakash Narayan, Vinoba's leading disciple, had this to say: "Bhoodan signified distribution of land to the landless. Gramdan, on the other hand, meant communization of the land. It became evident that Bhoodan had within it the germ of total agrarian revolution." By 1957 the offspring had outgrown its parent and was occupying most of the attention of those in the movement and the Indian press as well.

Developments in international Communism during this period also helped the C.P.I. to overcome its shyness. As the Khrushchev many-roads-to-socialism line emerged after Stalin's death, the willingness of the moderates or "centrists" within the C.P.I. to coexist with the Gandhians received a doctrinal pat on the back. By the time of the Soviet Union's Twentieth Party Congress, this faction, headed by Ajoy Ghosh and E. M. S. Namboodiripad (soon to become Chief Minister of Kerala), had become the dominant faction in the C.P.I. Ghosh returned from the Twentieth Congress to report to the 1956 C.P.I. convention that "the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism" had been proclaimed in Moscow. "This thesis of peaceful transition to socialism is a big weapon in our

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hands," he said. "It enables us to forge links with the socialists who sincerely desire socialism but abhor civil war."

Thus the C.P.I., which is among the world's most Moscow-oriented Communist parties, was now able to develop its own "national" approach without pangs of conscience. Viewed in this perspective, Kerala Chief Minister Namboodiripad's hospitality to Bhave last spring loses its overtones of innocence.

The summer of 1957 saw Vinoba intensifying his activity in Kerala and being hailed by optimists as paving the way for another "Hyderabad." But the Communists were no longer viewing the Gandhians as competitors and were responding to their advances with open arms. The wooing was now mutual. And the weekly newspaper, *Bhoodan,* carried frequent reports of known Communists joining the movement throughout the country.

In September the C.P.I. sent delegates to an all-parties Gramdan Conference held in Mysore State and attended by, among others, the Prime Minister and the President of India. The Conference report appealed to all sections of the Indian people "to give this mission their enthusiastic support," claiming that "it would further create a psychological climate all over the country for the solution of land problems and furtherance of cooperative life." Shortly after the Conference, Namboodiripad, who was one of the Communist delegates, told a public meeting in Mysore that the C.P.I. recognized in the Gramdan movement "an alternative to its own policy in regard to land problems and rural reorganization."

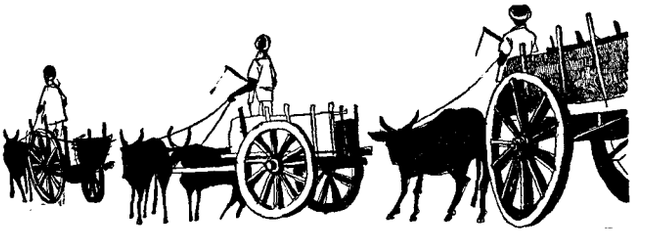
THEN in October the C.P.I. monthly, *New Age,* published some of Bhave's recent remarks under the title "Sarvodaya and Communism" for the purpose —as the editors claimed—of meeting the "demand for discussion of communist philosophy and action from readers." *Sarvodaya* (Gandhi's term for his ideal social order) literally means the uplift of all; and for the neo-Gandhians it holds a religio-philosophical significance. The Sarvodaya society is vaguely envisioned as one where violence and compulsion are unknown. There are no castes, no classes, no State. In Sarvodaya men no longer crave power, wealth, or fame, and are content to live in self-sufficient villages where the welfare of each is equated with the welfare of all.

Thus, said Bhave to the Communists, there are many points on which we agree. And the *New Age* quotes him as maintaining that when "minor differences" are passed over, "there is no difference in our conception of the ideal society and its nature." The ideal of Communism, continued Bhave, "by itself is a very great thing." But "I ask the Communists also to tell me how to reach their paradise? They answer that I should be prepared for some violence and killing." In this way we differ, said the Acharya. "If we are to prepare ourselves mentally for some violence today hoping that non-violence is bound to come at some distant stage, it is possible that non-violence itself would never be realized."

And then came the heart of Bhave's appeal: "Though Communism permits violence we have to accept that it is compassion that inspires it. This is a paradox. . . . We have to cut at this. We have to demonstrate the power of both love and peace." If only the Communists would renounce violent means, and adjust their program to the cultural tradition of India, "as the Ganges becomes wider and moves on and finally merges in the ocean, . . . Marxism will merge into Sarvodaya one day." So there is no permanent conflict between the two ideologies, according to Bhave. "The future will prove the truth of this. The Communist friends welcome me. I love them."

In the December issue of *New Age* three C.P.I. members responded to Bhave's appeal. The first article was a highly theoretical discussion of the place of violence as an alternative means of social revolution in particular situations. More important than the exercize in dialectical reasoning was the following passage: "It is necessary to pay tribute to the Acharya for his declaration that compassion inspires the Communist when he resorts to violence. One hopes that this statement of the greatest living votary of satyagraha will lay at rest doubts on this point often expressed so loudly." This statement, when coupled with the second Party member's discussion of the points raised by Vinoba Bhave in relation to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, underlined the transition in C.P.I. tactical thought. But the third article in the Party journal contained the key to the new attitude towards Bhave. Turning the Gandhians' argument upside down, the writer declared, "Just as Hinduism took the best in Buddhism and Jainism and developed, keeping in view the historical necessity which demanded great adjustments (as otherwise it would face annihilation), Marxism (although a scientific theory and not a religion), too, takes into its fold ideologies like Sarvodaya. On the other hand, if Sarvodaya, as it is, is found to suit the Indian conditions and yields best results, it is nothing but Marxism applied to India."

The situation which emerges would be humorous



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were it not so ominous. Each movement is trying to absorb the other. Those who have faith that love will ultimately conquer all will probably give the edge to Bhave. But students of Communist infiltration techniques and ideological hypocrisy have reason for pessimism.

If the Commissar ever comes to Delhi he could be of a breed hitherto unknown—an ascetic wearing a loin cloth, carrying a copy of the *Gita,* and chanting *shanti, shanti,* peace, peace.

THE STAGE

DEMOCRATIC PIETIES

TO OFFER at once an irrelevance of biography: I belong to the generation for which Franklin Roosevelt—the only President we had known and hence forever, unalterably, *the* President— was but a presence, remote though loved, and for which the first smash of political actuality was his death. Some few choice spirits doubtless moved beyond this insularity, I did not; and one trusts it is courtesy rather than egotism which prompts the fragment of personal detail: to it I have hoped to ascribe my bland indifference to Mr. Dore Schary's "Sunrise at Campobello." The alternative possibility, that art as much as nature may be at fault, is not, however, to be dismissed; indeed, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, for all her high *politesse* and grace, affirms precisely this point. The delicacy of her lunar observation—"It had no more to do with me than the man in the moon"—could not be more critically pertinent.

No one, of course, has claimed for "Sunrise at Campobello" more than the authority of sentiment and public recollection. Mr. Schary shows his modesty of spirit—as well, one may say, as his commitments of value—by confining his dramatization of the Roosevelt fact to an aspect of crisis: the thirty-four months between 1921 and 1924 in which Roosevelt came to terms with the private catastrophe of paralysis. Of the public individual, involved in any large enterprise of self, there are but perfunctory illustrations ("Now about that letter to Cordell Hull . . .") and to any evocative suggestion of future scope or limitation, Mr. Schary is quite indifferent. His concern is with the arena of private experience, and his assumptions of judgment are ultimately domestic. We are permitted only one impact of Roosevelt seen within the vista of history: the heroic moment of Smith's nomination in 1924. It is obviously the image which dictated "Sunrise at Campobello," and Mr. Schary realizes it with wordless eloquence, with an emotional ease profoundly simple and full. It is not a reflex of cynicism to observe, however, though gently, that the occasion owes all of its validity to history, not art.

The commercial success of "Sunrise at Campobello," the generosity with which it has been critically remarked, the distressing rumor that it may represent this country at the Brussels Fair—all of these make their own various just comments on public desire and amiability and illusion, on history and art. I must record, in this vein, the melancholy impression—not inapposite—that as a theater occasion, "Sunrise at Campobello" makes very tenuous connection with its audience. One senses small pleasure and less tension. The evening is what is known as "nice"—which is to say, well-mannered and genteel. If it never makes a false step, one is moved to wonder if it knows how. The direction is flaccid and official. The settings reflect the dun-colored anonymity of the language, not surprising when we consider the nineteen-twenties as a moment in taste. The characters are played as humors: Louis Howe as a crotchety outsider; Missy LeHand as the faithful retainer, all wise benignity and shorthand; Sara Delano as a Hudson River dragon (domestic variety) . . . . . Miss Mary Fickett, required to impersonate one of the absolute ladies of this century, effaces herself modestly. There is, however, point of view and exuberance in Mr. Alan Bunce's sketch of Smith.

Yet the harsh point must be made: Mr. Schary's democratic piety, however dogged and unexceptionable, and whatever honor it may do him as a man, is simply not adequate to the dramatic burden he has assumed. In its featureless tolerance, it is at once humble and arrogant: humble because it recognizes the common humanity (whatever that may be) underlying all mortal existence; arrogant, because it invokes great forces out of life—suffering, power, courage and stoicism—with the naive confidence that they are created by being named. For all its reticence and taste, moreover, one cannot repress the sensation that "Sunrise at Campobello" asks vicarious participation in experience which is classically *obscene*—invites observation of intimacy, humiliation, despair, which make no personal levy, have cost one nothing in kind. Such material from life can be made imaginatively accessible only by art, with its stylistic removal, selection and concentration, or within some other austere perspective. And the final effect of "Sunrise at Campobello" as art is to affirm Valéry's melancholy dictum that poetry is written with words, not ideas—nor, one might amend, sentiments.

The problem of acting Roosevelt—or any figure out of history—is, of course, formidable. It is complicated here by proximity, which insists at the least on some sympathetic congruence of manner and tone and personal display—that is, on a discreet mimicry. Ideally, a great performance would imply the projection, through an adequate technique, of large ideas,

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achieving not only a fine translation of reality in terms of the actor's self, but some further comment on, or enhancement of it. There would have to be, that is, the distillation of a pietic idea. Mr. Ralph Bellamy, all things considered, maintains a pleasing balance between these two demands. I found more wearing than most his suggestions of manner—the cigarette holder, the cocked chin, etc.: surely a real elegance and class prestige supported this element of hauteur in Roosevelt. Still, Mr. Bellamy's ideas are full of dignified spirit, and he makes his effects securely. He has not, of course, a text of dramatic power to carry him, on the motifs of which he might dilate significantly. Mr. Schary's wash of democratic sentiment, gregarious and leveling, rinses ultimately from human personality the very grittiness and passionate selfhood in which lie its uniqueness. No actor may convey, therefore, what might above all have justified this theatrical comment on history: a sense, in Mr. Stark Young's words, of the beauty, solitude and fatality of great natures. *(At the Cort.)*

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

ZOLA SAYS

IT HARDLY seems possible that there could be another film about the Dreyfus case—but there is. And this new movie called "I Accuse!" tells the famous controversial story with a freshness and vitality that make it as lively as any other film of 1958. Thanks are due mainly to Sam Zimbalist's fine production with a good cast and some beautiful black-and-white photography shot in Belgium and England, the direction of José Ferrer, who also stars in the film, and the intelligent script written by Gore Vidal from the book by Nicholas Halasz. Of course the Dreyfus story itself deserves much of the credit for the dramatic impact of the movie; it is a fascinating tale about a wronged man who became a *cause célèbre,* a tale that is told against a background of human rights opposed to authority and national security.

"I Accuse!" makes no attempt at being a mystery film. It starts right out showing Major Esterhazy dealing with the Germans, and then it shows the French counterspies in action and the steps that led to the accusation of Dreyfus through a similarity in handwriting. The fact that Dreyfus was the first Jewish officer on the French General Staff was not in his favor. The 1894 trial, with its use of supposition, prejudice and twisted truth, is most painful to watch; and so is the later scene when new evidence points to Esterhazy but the General refuses to re-open the case and Dreyfus is publicly degraded and sent to Devil's Island. While the film does not get into all the complicated issues, especially along religious lines, that divided France in the following years, it does convey well the controversies that flared up over the arguments on human rights versus authority.

Both Ferrer the director and Ferrer the actor do well by Dreyfus, making him a fussy, meticulous man who is intensely loyal to his family and to the Army; a little man, unjustly accused and convicted, who never seems quite sure what hit him. Years later, after the pardon, he says: "I am not a man. I am a cause." Although the film concentrates on Dreyfus, it by no means neglects the other characters in this re-echoing drama: Viveca Lindfors as his wife, David Farrar as his brother, Anton Walbrook as the brash, swaggering Esterhazy, Leo Genn as Major Picquart who insisted on Dreyfus' innocence (for which he was transferred to Tunisia), Peter Illing as Clemenceau, and many others as officers, politicians and indignant citizens in the pro- or anti-Dreyfus camps. Outstanding in this cast is Emlyn Williams as Zola, who reads the famous *J'Accuse* letter with remarkably effective understatement. Perhaps the movie is all the more startling throughout because it never screams in anger. It's been said that the French objected to its being made. They can be consoled somewhat at this flagrant display of injustice in the land of liberty, equality and fraternity by the final scenes, which take place years later when Dreyfus is reinstated and finally made a Knight of the Legion of Honor. They can also be proud that eventually human rights were found to be more important than the authoritarian army.

IT ISN'T every day that a western is made specially for adults. Such a film is "Cowboy," which is as stark as its title. Edmund H. North based his script on Frank Harris's *My Reminiscences as a Cowboy* and made no attempt to prettify the plot or themes. There's a slight romance in which Frank Harris (played by Jack Lemmon) falls in love with a beautiful Mexican girl (Anna Kashfi) but this ends on a sour note and is not pushed too hard. Actually, all of "Cowboy" is determined to take the poetic and bookish quality out of life on the range. Young Harris, a Chicago hotel clerk, who has a lot of dreamy notions about cowboys, joins a big-shot cattle baron (Glenn Ford) on a drive and learns there's more to life in the Wild West than the songs told about: riding horseback all day is exhausting; men living together are likely to quarrel; cattle are even more obstreperous than men. While Producer Julian Blaustein has given "Cowboy" a handsome production in Technicolor and Director Delmer Daves has spared no effort to show that men can be crueller than animals, the picture manages to have many poetic passages in spite of its theme. Brian

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Donlevy, Dick York, Richard Jaeckel and others in the supporting cast do an excellent job in helping Ford make a seasoned cowboy out of the literary tenderfoot.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

NUCLEAR WAR

Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITORS:: Gordon G. Zahn's letter [Jan. 10] on "Nuclear War and the Theologians" is full of sound and a certain pacifist fury, but it doesn't make much sense.

If John Cogley "thinks the issue through again," says Zahn, "he may come to the conclusion that pacifism is practically and theoretically the inescapable answer for the Christian."

May I remark that Cogley may not come to that conclusion at all, and that Cogley can be trusted to do his own "thinking through?" It would be courteous of Mr. Zahn to allow him to do so.

Mr. Zahn's own thinking becomes preposterous when he equates the problem of the American Christian today with that of the German Catholic in Hitler's time. I think we may dismiss out-of-hand a mind incapable of distinguishing between those situations. Mr. Zahn is not facing reality; he is thumping the pacifist tub.

It is the understatement of all time to say that Pius XII is both Christian and intelligent. If Mr. Zahn will read the Pope's 1957 Christmas message, he will find that the Holy Father counsels the free nations to stand militarily immovable; he suggests pacifism to no one, and he rejects in so many words Mr. Zahn's proposal that we retreat into the catacombs and resign ourselves to martyrdom.

I do not think I am alone in growing weary of the simplicist—not to say simpleton—statements of those who seem unable to realize that just war remains just war, even though it may kill millions rather than thousands.

Only a deep-seated unconscious materialism can explain the handwringing of those who think that justice may be defended with a bow and arrow but not with a nuclear warhead. And only mental captivity to concepts from another age makes it impossible for such persons to realize that although innocents still may not be directly attacked, the reality about who is an innocent has changed enormously, as has the reality about direct attack. . . .

JOSEPH A. BREIG.

Staten Island, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: A small word of appreciation for John Cogley and his remarks on "More on Nuclear War" in your January 3rd issue. I don't agree with Mr. Cooper about "gauzy evasions," etc. It is extremely difficult to define the actual problem (in terms all understand in the same way), much less come up with any simple solution, to be expressed in part of one page.

Perhaps my experience is unique, although it seems to parallel Mr. Cogley's: I've found that almost everyone with whom the subject of morality of nuclear war is broached comes back with one of two discouraging responses:

1. Any war these days is immoral, so let's not waste time discussing it, or
2. Anything that permits us to protect ourselves is all right.

Has anybody wondered whether the theologians have enough information available to them to do more than scratch the surface? For instance, wouldn't the whole moral assessment be influenced strongly if it were known that the Strategic Air Command "briefed" targets were purely military installations remote from inhabited areas. Further, that only weapons with negligible fall-out characteristics were to be used? This is purely hypothetical, but isn't it the *kind* of information that affects a judgment?

But then there are those who condemn nuclear weapons almost without regard to what their yield and where they are used. The more you look at the problem, the thornier it gets, as it appears Mr. Cogley has ably recognized.

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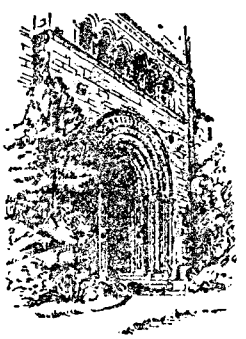

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National Hero and a Mythic Creation

PARNELL AND HIS PARTY. By Conor Cruise O'Brien. Oxford. $7.20.

By DAVID H. GREENE

TO AMERICANS who may have noticed how much he seems to haunt the work of Irish writers, Charles Stuart Parnell was the leader whose attempts to achieve Home Rule for Ireland collapsed when divorce proceedings were brought against the woman he had been living with for some years. Three weeks after the verdict, he was dethroned as chairman of the Irish party and was no longer "uncrowned king"of Ireland. With the Chief discredited and his party split, a great English party, no longer needing Irish support to return it to power, withdrew its promise of Home Rule. Ireland was no longer a factor in English politics. It was not the first time the nation's destiny had been decided by a woman; a squabble between O'Rourke of Breffni and MacMurrough of Leinster over a similar incident of wife-stealing led to the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century.

A remarkable fact about Parnell's career was that his success seems to have rested largely on the myth which he artfully created of himself. He was no Daniel O'Connell, sprung from the Catholic masses, fluent in the idiom of the people, but a Protestant landlord, unemotional, uninterested in Irish history —and largely ignorant of it—and incapable of exercising the verbal hypnosis which some of his lieutenants were capable of. He was attractive to women, however, and attracted to them. It is a just analogy that Joyce draws in *Ulysses* with Achilles, though one is tempted to see him more as the Irish epic hero Cuchulain. Cuchulain was the watchdog of his people, capable of a mysterious feat of levitation known as the "salmon leap," wielding a mysterious weapon only vaguely discerned and never described, but still vulnerable to the slings of his adversaries—he comes from battle with his body so cut up that the birds of the air can fly through his ribs. Like Lord Raglan trying to explain Cuchulain as a kind of god image or sacred idol, we are tempted to leave Parnell unhumanized, in all the baroque splendor befitting the creature of a vivid folk imagination.

It is certainly in this guise that Parnell has continued to cast his influence upon the Irish popular imagination since his death. Mr. Conor Cruise O'Brien has argued that Parnell became the "essential hero of rebellious youth" because his defiance of England, of the moral conventions, and of the Roman Catholic hierarchy established for such youth "a firm connection between the separate ideas of national, spiritual, and sexual emancipation." To this cult of "Parnellism," as Mr. O'Brien defines it, may be attributed the persistent reaction against puritanical Catholicism which runs through Irish writing from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to the work of Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor and others.

The bishops had supported Parnell because he was the only conservative force in Irish politics powerful enough to keep the young men of Ireland from revolution. But his downfall came largely at their hands, and if Mr. O'Brien's thesis is sound, it is ironic that after his death they should find him influencing the young men of a later generation to insurrection against the moral leadership of an Irish Church that has never been noted for its sympathetic attitude to the natural weaknesses and inclinations of youth.

Since making his observation some ten years ago, Mr. O'Brien has reaffirmed it in more inclusive terms and raised another question. Now—in *Parnell and His Party* the most completely documented and most astute book on the subject—he asks, of Parnell's last struggle: "Did this collective emotional explosion of 1890 help to set free the imaginative forces which, for a time in the early 1900's, made Dublin—the Parnellite city—an important center of world literature? One cannot prove it to be so, but one does sense in that literature the Parnellite shock." One cannot indeed prove it, but a sentence in Yeats makes one wonder if it wouldn't be worth trying. "It was the death of Parnell that convinced me that the moment had come for work in Ireland, for I knew that for a time the imagination of young men would turn from politics."

Mr. O'Brien, however, deals only indirectly with Parnell himself, his object being not to write a life but to see how Parnell's party "developed and what it did; how it was led and how, finally, it and its leader destroyed each other." He does this brilliantly, forsaking his deft narrative occasionally for detailed examinations of party make-up and finances. One wishes, however, that he had followed the leader more instead of the pack.

He quotes Tim Healy's statement about seizing "the idea of this man with his superb silences, his historic name, his determination, his self-control, his aloofness" as the canvas of a great national hero. He also quotes a lieutenant's description of Parnell in the mist behind Greenwich observatory, garbed in "gigantic fur cap, a shooting-jacket of rough tweed, a knitted woolen vest of bright scarlet and a pair of shooting or wading boots reaching to the thighs," and looking out of "unearthly half-extinguished eyes flickering mournfully out of their deep caverns, the complexion of dead clay, the overgrown fair beard and the locks rolling down behind almost to his shoulders. It was the apparition of a poet plunged in some divine anguish or a mad scientist mourning over the fate of some forlorn invention."

Mr. O'Brien apologizes for quoting such a colorful description in a book which is not a biography but an essay in political history. But the apparition which Parnell's lieu-

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tenant had beheld was that of a romantic hero, Mr. O'Brien remarks, and it is clear that Parnell had become for his immediate followers and for the Irish people "an incarnate myth." Precisely, and in pointing this out, Mr. O'Brien encourages me to regret that he did not turn his great intelligence and learning to the task of explaining the man behind the myth instead of leaving him as he did—the most shadowy character in this extraordinary book.

Joycean Elements

WE'LL TO THE WOODS NO MORE. By Edouard Dujardin. Introduction by Leon Edel. New Directions. $3.

By MARVIN MAGALANER

CONTEMPORARY poets and novelists—T. S. Eliot and James Joyce most prominently—have been responsible in their creative work for the rehabilitation of many obscure predecessors whose writings the reading public seemed quite willing to let die. Jessie Weston's scholarly and unspectacular *From Ritual to Romance* has merited publication in paperback this year only because Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land* acknowledge his debt to it for the symbolic structure of his poem. And Giambattista Vico could hardly have expected translation into English of his *New Science* recently if Joyce had not diverted Vico's theory of cyclical history to his own narrative ends in *Finnegans Wake*.

Edouard Dujardin's *We'll to the Woods No More* is another example in point. Except for Joyce's statement that he had discovered the interior monologue in Dujardin's short novel of the 1880's, there is little question that this trivial story would have remained in the obscurity of the past. Joyce's admiring words rescued it from oblivion. It would indeed be ironic if, as the late Mary Colum believed, Joyce's elaborate recognition of his literary predecessor was a gigantic leg-pull. In *Life and the Dream* Mrs. Colum says that Joyce hinted as much when she challenged him with her suspicions. Joyce's answer to her was ambiguous, maybe deliberately so: "I hate women who know anything," he said.

The reader of Dujardin's novel finds many Joycean elements. The action is confined to one day. The hero is, like J. Alfred Prufrock and Leopold Bloom, blatantly antiheroic. His whole frustrated being is directed on this evening toward the seduction of a twenty-year-old gold-digging actress. Yet with her head on his breast he falls asleep. He cannot talk except in banalities during what he has hoped will be a romantic ride through Paris by lamplight. He wants to be asked to stay the night in his love's apartment, but he is immensely relieved when the mocking actress puts him off.

How much, if any, of Daniel Prince rubs off on Bloom is debatable. Unquestionably, however, there are, reading the novels in reverse order, echoes of *Ulysses* in the story, many of them hitherto unremarked. Compare, for instance, this passage from Dujardin with the famous ending of Joyce's novel: "Yes, I mean it . . . . I'd take her in my arms and kiss her hair; I'd carry her down; and softly, yes softly she'd whisper Yes . . . . " How like this fantasy of Daniel Prince are Molly Bloom's final words: ". . . and then he asked me would I yes . . . and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down . . . and yes I said yes I will Yes."

It would be patently unfair to compare with *Ulysses* a minor work of the nineteenth century—one which never tried to be more than a temporary diversion for readers of light fiction—if the circumstances of its reissue did not make comparison inescapable. The read-

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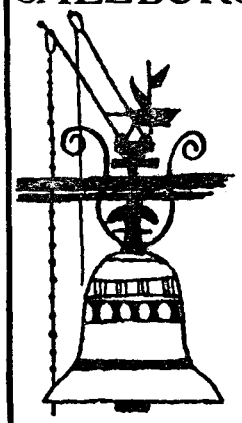

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er will find the lack of post-Freudian subtlety in characterization glaring though he may find the result refreshingly simple. As Leon Edel points out in the excellent introduction, the interior monologue is almost painfully explicit and therefore wooden. Though everything which is thought and said emanates from the consciousness of the protagonist, he conveniently thinks and speaks elaborate stage directions. His flashbacks in time and memory are often as contrived as the formal tales of his past which Odysseus tells in Homer. The wonder is not that Joyce encountered Dujardin but that he was able to transmute the feeble monologue of his forerunner into the powerful literary device it becomes in *Ulysses*. However pleasant *We'll to the Woods No More* may be, it is important almost entirely as a measure of progress in the modern novel.

Under the Nazis

BREAKING POINT. By Jacob Presser. Translated by Barrows Mussey. World. $2.50.

By RICHARD L. SCHOENWALD

A MAN will do almost anything to lengthen his life just a bit, even if he must give up the idea of life and cling desperately to the notion of existence alone. No inhumanity appears too great if it will win a few more hours, another day, or another week. This century's catastrophes, and their examination by existentialists and more orthodoxly religious thinkers, leave no doubt of the difficulties facing him who would follow the motto prefixed to this novel and be a man to men.

Jacob Presser, a Dutch historian and a Jew, has written a brief, shocking story. His narrator is an assimilated Dutch Jew persuaded that he can escape Auschwitz by being one of the inside gang. In a camp in Holland he helps choose the weekly quota sent eastward in foul trains to torture and extermination. He is sickened but he persists until he meets a Jewish religious teacher of compelling saintliness. Then, almost as suddenly as he had decided to aid the "Disposition Service," he turns against the Jews who have sold out and against the Nazis. The novel represents his attempt to understand his past as he confronts the fate to which he had dispatched so many others.

The book's compression makes some devices and effects too shrill and obvious, but horror cannot be packaged prettily. It does overwhelm beholders who often can only back away from it repeating, "The horror, the horror." Presser forces the reader to acknowledge the cruelty within a man, within all men.

As a historian Presser is now working on a study of Dutch Jewry under the Nazis. Certainly it is significant that he turned to fiction also. Few people will believe readily in the facts about the camps and the elaborate plans for wiping out all European Jews published by Leon Poliakov, Gerald Reitlinger, and Elie A. Cohen. Even films do not succeed: young Americans watching piles of bones at Buchenwald hear them speak for a moment, but then their selective mechanisms turn off the message.

Hannah Arendt wondered whether rational language could ever encompass the Nazi reality. That nightmare which lasted so long may be attributed to the sadistic, deprived masses of an industrial civilization in revolt, but has it been grasped, even when this explanation is made? This answer furnishes a beginning, and a novel like Presser's reminds those growing comfortable as Dachau fades into a matter for scholarly footnotes that understanding demands further effort.

The camps belong to a world glorying in itself, prideful because its trains carry more people, and carry them faster, to their doom. "The train, the train . . . compared to this train, the guillotine is a toy, a piece of Louis XVI bric-a-brac." Coal will give way to jet power, and atomic energy will fuel the crematoria yet unbuilt. Men come into the world to live as men, not to be

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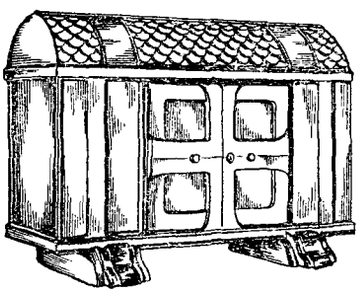

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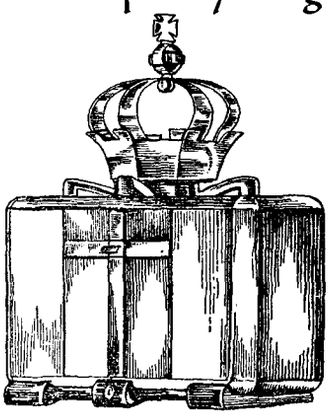

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herded screaming into cattle cars. Men who make this world their only goal may find the end Presser portrays, the oven's flames after a trip from which no bribe can deliver them.

Genius of Youth

THE DIARY OF HELENA MORLEY. Trans. by Elizabeth Bishop. Farrar, Straus. $4.75.

By PATRICIA DONEGAN

THE *Diary of Helena Morley* is the direct, untrammeled, observation, comment and musing of a child from twelve to thirteen who lived in a mountain town in Brazil at the turn of the century. It meets all the conventional standards of literary criticism; it has unity, characters realized and dimensional, clear and vivid description, humor and pathos. However, what makes it a very special kind of book is what it owes, as George Bernanos wrote, "to genius drawn from its very source, to the genius of adolescence."

Life for an adolescent in Diamantina, Brazil, between 1893 and 1895 was, though simple, a crowded one. It was full of family, friends, neighbors and festivals. There was not only a much-loved mother and a father who mined rather unsuccessfully for diamonds, but brothers and sisters, an indulgent grandmother, cousins, uncles and aunts, and a host of neighbors such as Sia Ritinha, the chicken thief. All these characters are observed with the greatest directness by the author, who can sum up a character with relish in one sentence.

"Ever since Chininha came to spend her vacation at the chacara, pretending to be a saint all the time to please grandma, my life has been hell." There are festivals and feasts, which the young Helena loved, and which were not only colorful, but often hilarious, as in the procession in which all the saints got the wrong heads. There is a spirit of true faith inextricably woven into the pattern of Helena's days and family, and the honesty with which the young girl deals with the spiritual fiber of her life makes the interaction of the spiritual and temporal very compelling.

For instance, Helena loves all holy days, but she loves them best when she can go to the church next to her grandmother's chacara. Then they seem to be really hers. Helena also confesses that she hates to make sacrifices, but if she has to, she can. She is as direct in her evaluation of herself as she is of others, and she doesn't equivocate. "Today I was very happy after a week of being mad."

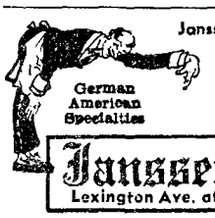
Unlike *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which by the very force of its special circumstances, was closed in, introspective and terribly sad, if no less revealing, this little book is full of gaiety, sunlight and a kind of rich gladness which was no less a part of the life she led than the author's personality. With this flavor of joyous participation of family, religion and life, it is a book of love—honest, and appreciative of the imperfect.

Baroque Vision

THE CHARITY BALL. By Egon Hostovsky. Translated by Philip H. Smith, Jr. Doubleday. $3.50.

By EDWARD CECH

THE BAROQUE vision of life and history as a drama is the predominant theme of twentieth-century Czech literature in general, as well as of the works of the emigré Egon Hostovsky in particular, *The Charity Ball* included. In his latest novel the language of Mr. Hostovsky, well translated by Philip H. Smith, Jr., is again permeated with terminology closely related to the theater and the stage. In a passage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where the author gives the fullest expression to his dramatic concept of life, Christ is also introduced as the all-knowing director of "the play."

The drama evolves from a charity ball for Central and Eastern European refugees, held in a New York hotel. Among those attending are Simon Feigel, a Czech Jewish millionaire and a searcher for the Absolute; Professor Oscar Wunderlich, an Austrian who lectures at Columbia University on Grillparzer, Kafka, Rilke and Werfel, but is better known as a clown; the Austrian Eugene Rindt; his American wife Anne, another searcher for the Absolute; and Eugene's brother Julius. At the beginning of the ball Eugene has a revolver which, it seems, he intends to use on his wife who, with his brother's cooperation, has made a cuckold of him. By the end of the novel, however, Julius is in possession of the revolver, which he uses to murder Anne, whom he finds having a rendezvous —more innocent than it appears— with Simon Feigel, and to commit suicide. "You have played your role well," a soft voice says to Julius as he walks down the hotel corridor in the interval between Anne's murder and his suicide. Thus, perhaps, a line is spoken by the Devil, the third actor necessary —as Vyacheslav Ivanov has pointed out in his exposition of the tragic aspect in Dostoevsky—in the dramatic struggle with God for man.

In his earlier works, what was said was expressed in terms of wild white horses and drums beating, of street lamps "burning low like candles on All Souls' Day," and of men and women who sleep "the sleep of angels in stars of dew among flowers and butterflies." In *The Charity Ball* the statements are in terms of, for example, Stanislaw, a Pole with a twitching nose, and Professor Wunderlich, who takes "specks of dust out of people's eyes when they get something in them." Only in the dream of Martha, a Czech girl, asleep in the lobby of the Hotel Atlanta, and in the thoughts which run through Julius's mind between the murder and his suicide are there brief suggestions of the former Hostovskian tenderness and lyricism. Granted that men with twitching noses and clowning professors are part of the drama, one cannot help regretting the discarding of a style and imagery which were more striking, more Slavic and more—well, let us say it—dramatic. *The Charity Ball* is not Egon Hostovsky's greatest work, but it is an interesting episode in the drama of the man who, as the blurb on the jacket rightly suggests, is today's leading Czech novelist.

REVIEWERS

David H. Greene is a member of the faculty at New York University and a specialist in Irish literature.

Marvin Magalaner is co-author, with Richard M. Kain, of *Joyce, The Man, The Work, The Reputation.*

Richard L. Schoenwald is the author of *Freud: The Man and the Mind.*

Patricia Donegan is a regular reviewer.

Edward Cech is a critic and translator.

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Winter — Spring

New readers of The Commonweal are frequently as pleased by the variety in the magazine as they are by the quality of the writing. During the last trial subscription period of thirteen weeks, for example, the following articles were among those published in our pages:

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